

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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SUBJ: SPINY LOBSTER: CUBAN/AMERICAN FISHERMEN

1. MR. JOSE H. PUJOL, SECRETARY OF MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION, CALLED ON AMB ON APRIL 11. APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN MADE BY MR. MAURICE DELIBERTO, GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE MIAMI FISHERIES COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION.

2. MR. PUJOL ADVISED AMB THAT HIS VISIT TO THE BAHAMAS WAS AN ATTEMPT TO INITIATE AND ASCERTAIN INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE BAHAMIAN FISHERIES IN ESTABLISHING A COOPERATIVE FISH-HOUSE OPERATION IN THE ISLANDS. ACCORDING TO PUJOL, HE HAD MET INFORMALLY AT SEA ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS WITH BAHAMIAN FISHERMEN FROM SPANISH WELLS, ELEUTHERA, WHO WERE VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN IDEA. AMB REQUESTED DCM TO JOIN IN CONVERSATION. AMB EXPRESSED OPINION THAT MR. PUJOL SHOULD DO NOTHING AT THIS POINT WHICH WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE POSITION OF HIS GROUP IN GAINING ACCESS TO BAHAMIAN WATERS, AND THAT TO UNILATERALLY DISCUSS ANY COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE FISHING INDUSTRY AS OPPOSED TO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COULD POSSIBLY JEOPARDIZE HIS CAUSE. TO EMBASSY'S REGRET, MR. PUJOL ADVISED US THAT HE AND OTHERS (APPROXIMATELY 70 VESSELS) WERE ALREADY FISHING IN WATERS WHICH HAD BEEN DENIED THEM BY
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THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT. HE WAS TOLD THAT THIS WAS BEING DONE AT GREAT RISK, AND THAT ALTHOUGH EMBASSY HAD HEARD RUMORS OF THIS BEING DONE, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IT HAD COME TO EMBASSY ATTENTION ON A FIRST-HAND BASIS, AND THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT IN ANY WAY CONDONE HIS ACTION.

3. AMB FURTHER INDICATED THAT THE USG WAS MAKING PROGRESS

IN ATTEMPTING TO DISCUSS WITH GCOB THE BLAKE PLATEAU ISSUE AND ECONOMIC BOUNDARIES, AND THAT ONCE THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED WE COULD THEN APPROACH THE GCOB AGAIN ON THE FISHERIES ISSUE AND HOPE TO REACH A MORE SATISFACTORY SOLUTION.

4. MR. PUJOL INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NOT DISCUSS THE COOPERATIVE FISHHOUSE OPERATION WITH ANY OF THE BAHAMIAN FISHERMEN AT THIS POINT.

5. COMMENT: MINEXTAFF AND INDEED BAHAMIAN PUBLIC AT LARGE ARE AWARE OF "CUBAN" POACHING IN BAHAMIAN WATERS. FACT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO APPREHENSION OF POACHERS BY BAHAMIAN AUTHORITIES, OR INCIDENTS, REFLECTS THAT GCOB ENFORCEMENT IS STILL SADLY LACKING. WHILE WE TOO HAD HEARD ALLEGATIONS OF "CUBAN" POACHING, WE HAD ASSUMED THAT IT WAS FROM HAVANA RATHER THAN FROM MIAMI, A FACT WHICH PUJOL DENIED.

6. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT SPANISH WELLS FISHERMEN, WITH WHOM PUJOL WISHES TO FORM JOINT VENTURE, ARE TO GREAT EXTENT MEMBERS OF OPPOSITION BDP WITH LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR PLP GOVERNMENT. TO APPROACH THEM DIRECTLY WOULD, IN OUR OPINION, PROVOKE THE IRE OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN NASSAU. IN ADDITION, ANY OVERTURES TO GCOB BY MR. PUJOL, WHO WAS A MEMBER OF 1975 U.S. DELEGATION TO LOBSTER TALKS AND WHO IS A "BETE NOIR" OF MINEXTAFF ADDERLEY, COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO GET VERY FAR.

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